

SIEMENS: Security in networks -- Siemens & iD2 solution for auto admin of cryptographic key pairs

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Abstract:

The Siemens Group Information and Communication Networks, Munich, and iD2 Technologies, Stockholm, are offering an innovative solution, which is available now, for efficient creation and administration of digital keys. These keys are vital for secure data transactions in Internet applications such as e-commerce or e-mail. The two companies have come to an understanding, as part of a cooperation agreement, to integrate iD2's PKI (Public Key Infrastructure) technology into DirX, Siemens' solution for corporate directories ** (Meta Directory). The combined use of the iD2 solution and DirX automates the management of digital keys and guarantees confidentiality and security in both internal and external communication. This means that it is no longer necessary to keep public keys for communication partners on each local PC. Instead all the information needed is stored centrally on the Directory Server, with due regard to the legal requirements of the particular country concerned. The common solution from Siemens and iD2 both reduces communication costs and the costs of setting up and maintaining company-specific security infrastructures.*

Full Text:

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M2 PRESSWIRE-12 May 1999-SIEMENS: Security in networks -- Siemens and iD2 Technologies with a new solution for automatic administration of personal cryptographic key pairs (C)1994-99 M2 COMMUNICATIONS LTD

The Siemens Group Information and Communication Networks, Munich, and iD2 Technologies, Stockholm, are offering an innovative solution, which is available now, for efficient creation and administration of digital keys. These keys are vital for secure data transactions in Internet applications such as e-commerce or e-mail. The two companies have come to an understanding, as part of a cooperation agreement, to integrate iD2's PKI (Public Key Infrastructure)* technology into DirX, Siemens' solution for corporate directories ** (Meta Directory). The combined use of the iD2 solution and DirX automates the management of digital keys and guarantees confidentiality and security in both internal and external communication. This means that it is no longer necessary to keep public keys for communication partners on each local PC. Instead all the information needed is stored centrally on the Directory Server, with due regard to the legal requirements of the particular country concerned. The common solution from Siemens and iD2 both reduces communication costs and the costs of setting up and maintaining company-specific security infrastructures.

For users Certification Authorities (CA) create electronic certificates consisting of information about the identity of the person concerned, public and private keys and the period of validity for the information. In such cases the X.509 Standard regulates the content and structure of the certificates, which can be seen as an electronic appendage to a personal ID card. They guarantee both the authenticity of the sender and the absolute confidentiality, binding nature and integrity of electronic information. The Certification Authority here represents a trustworthy and independent body for issuing the certificates, just like a passport-issuing authority. Its functions include guaranteeing the quality of the cryptographic procedures used and the authentication of the assignment of keys to users.

For storage and administration - creation, distribution, revocation, deletion - of the certificates and the revocation lists with blocked certificates, a reliable and scalable infrastructure, a public-key infrastructure, is needed, such as the one provided by iD2 Certificate Manager and the Siemens Meta

Directory DirX. In addition to other directory data, the Meta Directory allows certificates and revocation lists to be administered. The required information is retrieved by applications such as electronic commerce or e-mail from the Meta Directory and transferred using the LDAP standard (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) to clients where it is available to the applications. When e-mail is sent for example this makes it possible to insure that only the desired recipient can read the contents of the message (privacy). The recipient has proof by an applied digital signature that the sender of the message really is the person he/she claims to be (authentication) and thus cannot deny having written the message (non repudiation). Proof is also recorded that the message was not altered during transmission (Integrity).

Only the Certification Authority possess the rights to modify the public key data in the global corporate directory. For this remote access to the Meta directory DirX provides a secure authorization concept, into which smart cards can be integrated for example.

About iD2 Technologies

iD2 Technologies, an Ericsson associated company, develops and sells a complete set of tools and software products to enable secure transactions and identification on the Internet. The company has clients in banking, telecommunications and postal services throughout Europe and Asia. Established by AU-system group in 1996, iD2 Technologies takes advantage of more than 10 years of experience spent developing IT-solutions and products in combination with PKI and smart card technologies. In December 1998 iD2 won the Grand Prize at the European IT Prize awards for its digital certificate management system, iD2 Certificate Manager. The international jury of experts thus recognized the iD2 Certificate Manager as an outstanding and trailblazing technological innovation with high market potential. The European IT prize is the successor to the ITEA prize and was awarded in 1998 for the fourth time. It is jointly organized by the Esprit program of the EU Commission DG III - Industry and the European Council of Applied Sciences and Engineering and is one of the most respected prizes in Europe.

*Public Key Infrastructure

A procedure which uses asymmetric encryption mechanisms - a combination of private and public keys and electronic certificates - is called a public key infrastructure.

Meta Directory

Many sources of data exist in companies and organizations and the fact that these are often maintained in multiple versions and in an inconsistent way results in a great deal of administrative effort. A Meta Directory provides assistance in the time-consuming, expensive and error-prone search for information. It groups all information together into a uniform electronic directory, makes it accessible via a single user interface and automatically keeps the data up to date. Meta Directories such as DirX from Siemens leave the data where it originates and where it belongs. Synchronization and replication tools are used to create a logically-uniform, globally available directory and not just a new database. Special features of the Siemens product are its support for all widely-used operating systems, certification for the Microsoft range of products and also integration into Internet applications. Siemens is the world market leader in the provision of LDAP/X.500 directories.

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